

Billy vs. The Homeowners Association by PaperBodies

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Summary:

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"Howdy, neighbor!" she called out with an exaggerated wave. Billy hated her immediately. He wished, desperately, that Steve was there to deal with her, but Steve was at work, probably elbow deep in finger paint. Billy stood up and wiped a hand across his sweaty forehead. He took off the work gloves he was wearing and tucked them into the back pocket of his jeans.

"Hello," he said a little warily. She took the fake friendliness down a few notches as she got closer. He felt a little spark of his old anger when he saw the way her eyes lingered on his sweaty t-shirt. She was at least ten years older than Billy's 31, and he had used up the last of his patience with obvious staring from older women a few years back. He didn't really need the ego boost anymore, not when he ended every day with Steve. He was suddenly glad he had chosen to throw a shirt on that morning, in deference to the slight spring chill still lingering in the air. His smile went sharp at the edges, and it didn't reach his eyes. "Is there something I can do for you?" He asked, and took pride in the fact that it didn't quite sound actively hostile.

"Welcome to the neighborhood," she said brightly, holding out the gift basket. Billy took it a little reluctantly and held it in front of him. She had managed to move her eyes off of Billy's chest, and was now running a speculative eye over the absolute mess he was making of his front yard. "I'm Sandra Walker, I live at the end of the block. I'm the President of the HOA." She smiled at him again, all false welcome. "Looks like you have quite a bit of work planned for the front yard." Her tone was a little icy now. "Did you have something specific in mind?" Billy looked around the neighborhood, taking in the succession of nearly identical front lawns. He turned back to look at her.

“We do,” he said with an answering smile. It was almost actively unfriendly this time. He considered leaving it at that, making her actually ask, but decided to push a little. “We’re thinking about succulents, mostly, because of the water situation, you know. And we definitely have our hearts set on a butterfly garden. There are all kinds of wildflowers that attract butterflies here.” It was amusing, the way she almost visibly flinched at the mention of wildflowers. Billy took another look at the expanses of lawn in the neighborhood, only broken up by the occasional boring hedge or over-sculpted rosebush in either red or yellow. He made a mental note to expand the butterfly garden, and add more colors to it.

“Well, if I were you, I’d make sure to read all the HOA guidelines about landscaping before launching into anything too major. I’d hate for you to have to change it back because you violated one of the regulations.” Her smile was completely insincere. At least the loathing was mutual.

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Billy said. He was an attorney—sure, he was only working part time now thanks to Steve’s trust fund, but he was still damn good at his job—so of fucking course he had read the HOA guidelines. He did that before they even decided to buy the house. Sandra was almost certainly going to hate what they had planned for the front yard, but it wasn’t going to violate a single HOA regulation. He could devote more time to making sure they got as close as possible, though.

“Well,” Sandra said a little tightly, “we’re certainly happy to have new folks in the neighborhood.” Her tone made it clear that she was, in fact, the opposite of happy about it. “I can’t wait to see what you have planned for the yard.” She made it to the end of the driveway before she turned around. “Oh, I almost forgot! My husband George and I are having a little neighborhood get-together on Friday evening. You and your wife should come by.” Billy’s eyebrows went up. He was pretty sure Steve had introduced himself to most of the neighbors by now, but maybe he had missed some. Billy smiled the first genuine smile he had given her all day, and didn’t bother to correct her.

“Looking forward to it,” Billy said, and he wasn’t even lying. This was going to be *fun*.

Author's Note:

Look, butterflies are mentioned, ok. I don't know either, but this is where my brain went and who am I to argue?

Also, hell yes I'm coming back to this AU. Lawyer Billy vs. the HOA has basically unlimited comedic potential. Am I married to a lawyer? And do I live in a neighborhood with a restrictive HOA? No comment.